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ABSTRACT

A sample of 1,190 transfer and occupational students enrolled in four community colleges were administered the Rotter Internal-External Scale (I-E Scale) and asked to report their college program (transfer or occupational), their sex, their age (below 20, 21-25, and above 25), and their marital status (married or single). The I-E Scale measured the extent to which students exhibited internal control (a perception of positive or negative events as being a consequence of their own actions) or external control (a belief that events in their life are generally unrelated to personal efforts). Results indicated that the transfer students had a lower mean I-E Scale score (were more internal) than the occupational students. Married students in both groups were significantly more internal than the single students. Occupational students over 26 years of age were significantly more internal than transfer students in their age group. Female transfer students scored significantly lower on the I-E Scale than the males, whereas the scores of the occupational students were nearly identical on the sex variable. Implications of findings are discussed. (MB)

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The Relationship of Locus of Control to Marital Status, Age, and Sex of Community College Students

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OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study examined locus of control: 1) between transfer and occupational community college students; and 2) among transfer and occupational community college students categorized as to marital status, age, and subject sex.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The need for gaining increased understanding of the personality characteristics and attitudes of the highly diverse community college student population has been clearly recognized (Brue, 1971). The concept of locus of control holds good potential for obtaining additional knowledge about community college students because it measures factors that shape behavior of most individuals. Internal control identifies an individual's perception of positive and negative events as being a consequence of his/her own actions. An externally controlled individual believes that events in her/his life are generally unrelated to personal efforts; belief in luck, fate, or chance predominates. An examination of locus of control could provide insights on the motivation and needs of community college students. Additionally, it would provide educators a better understanding how various categories of students may perceive the community college environment and the demands it places on their lives.

METHODOLOGY

The sample of this study consisted of 1,190 students enrolled in four community colleges. The data was collected from the subjects in randomly selected classrooms which enrolled both transfer and occupational students. The students classified themselves as either transfer or occupational.

The subjects were administered a personal data sheet along with the Rotter Internal-External Scale (I-E Scale). On the data sheet three variables

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were included: 1) marital status (married or single), 2) age (below 20, 21-25, and 26 or older), and 3) subject sex.

The relationship between the transfer and occupational students on I-E Scale scores was analyzed by a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Two three-way ANOVA's were performed to analyze the effects of I-E Scale scores as the dependent variable on the three independent variables of martial status, age, and subject sex for the transfer and occupational students, respectively. The probability level required for significance was .05.

DATA SOURCE

The Internal Versus External Locus of Control of Reinforcement Scale (I-E) (Rotter, 1966) contains 29 items. Internal control measures a low score, whereas, external control is identified as a high scores. Reliability estimates reported by Rotter (1966) and in more recent reports (e.g., Lefcourt, 1975) warrant its acceptability for use in group study. Using means obtained from a wide variety of samples, Owens (1969) computed the overall means of college students as 8.3 with a standard deviation of 3.9.

RESULTS

The transfer students had lower mean I-E Scale scores (more internal) than the occupational students, as shown on Table 1. The one-way ANOVA, however, indicated no significant main effect as shown by the F - ratio of 1.76.

Table 1

Summary of Analysis of I-E Scale Scores for the Occupational and Transfer Students

Group	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	F
Transfer	648	9.99	4.32	1.76
Occupational	542	10.31	4.02	
Total	1,190	10.13	4.15	

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The summary Tables 2 and 3 show the results of the three way ANOVAS along with the mean and standard deviation scores for the transfer and occupational students, respectively. It is noted that married students in both groups were significantly more internal than the single students at the .001 significance level. For the other two variables, the results were mixed. Occupational students over 26 years old were significantly (.05) more internal than their older counterparts. The older transfer students also scored lower (internal) when compared with the younger groups, though the results were non-significant (See Table 3). Lastly, female transfer students as shown on Table 2 scored significantly (.05) lower on the I-E Scale than the males. However, the scores of the occupational students on the sex variable were nearly identical. No significant interactions were found on either three-way ANOVA.

Table 2

Summary of Analysis of I-E Scale Scores for the Transfer Students on Marital Status, Age, and Sex

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	F
Marital Status				
Single	484	10.42	4.14	21.43**
Married	163	8.69	4.24	
Age				
20 and below	357	10.58	4.14	
21-25	161	9.91	4.26	2.38
26 and older	129	8.49	4.09	
Sex				
Female	262	10.42	4.21	7.38*
Male	384	9.69	4.22	

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Table 3

Summary of Analysis of I-E Scale Scores for the Occupational Students on Marital Status, Age, and Sex

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	F
Marital Status				
Single	303	11.07	3.77	
Married	238	9.34	4.15	26.33**
Age				
20 and below	231	11.33	3.69	
21-25	109	11.33	4.23	4.36*
26 and older	203	9.13	3.97	
Sex				
Female	274	10.39	3.82	
Male	263	10.21	4.25	1.01

** Significant at the .001 level
* Significant at the .05 level

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

A major importance in the findings of this study is that single students believe they have substantially less control of their actions than the marrieds as shown by the significantly higher (external) scores on the I-E Scale. Marriage is perceived as a major means of achieving identity (Dreyer, 1975). Many of the singles still have to achieve that critical component of identity in which another person recognizes an emotional relationship in the context of continuity which marriage may offer (Erikson, 1959). The singles with their more fluid lifestyles may also believe they lack a reasonable control of their future. The fact that many community college students live at home with their parents may indicate that achieving autonomy is more difficult to

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achieve than it is for the resident college students. Also included among the singles are the increasing numbers of divorced students who have been cast into roles in which they may have less faith in controlling their lives.

The other significant findings do have some interesting implications. Older occupational students may well be more internal than younger students for they have gained some experience with adult life, and they may now believe that their decision to study in a specific occupation will stabilize their future. However, the transfer females were significantly more external than the transfer males. With the increasing demands on women to choose careers in our contemporary social climate, the transfer females may lack confidence in their ability to meet the demands of careers that transfer students typically pursue. Occupation selection is often a more murky issue for transfer students than for the occupational students.

The I-E Scale has been extensively utilized by educators in order to obtain greater knowledge about students. Its usefulness is indicated by the continuous flow of literature on the results of using this scale. This study indicates that it has good potential in further understanding the widely varied community college population.

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